College Steeped in Religious Tradition of Nonviolence

It is the month of May and this means commencement exercises at Elizabethtown College. Let us reflect on the 118-year history of Elizabethtown College as students prepare to graduate.

Lancaster County is well known as the home for large populations of religious sects associated with the baptists such as the Mennonites (1525), Amish (1693), and British Brethren (1708).Quaker (1650) and Baptist (1609)founders Pennsylvania, sharing similar theological principles with the Anabaptists, made the colony attractive to these refugees fleeing persecution in Europe.

The origins of Elizabethtown College are firmly rooted in the history of Anabaptism, the Pietists, the Historic Peace Churches, and particularly the German Baptist Brethren which since 1908 are referred to as the Church of the Brethren. Anabantism arose out of the religious and social ferment of the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648).

"Anabaptist" is a Greek word meaning "rebaptizer," used in church Latin since the 4th century. The Anabaptists of the Reformation repudiated infant baptism because they denied the readiness of an infant to receive the sacrament. They called for baptism only of adults on confession of faith.

The Anabaptists denied infant baptism was baptism at all and hence argued they were not "rebaptizers." The term was never used by the Anabaptists themselves and they vigorously objected to the designation because of the criminal character attached to the name.

The criminal character attached to the name Anabaptist was attributed to the imperial law code from Justinian's time (A.D. 529) making rebaptism a heresy penalized by death.

The narrative of the execution of the Anabaptists is recounted in stories and illustrations in the book: The Bloody Theater or Martyrs of the Defenseless Christians who baptized only upon confession of faith, and who suffered and died for the testimony of Jesus, their savior, from the time of Christ

to the year A.D. 1660. Originally published in Holland and then between 1745-1749 it was translated into German and printed the **Ephrata** Cloister (1732).

The Anabaptists were persecuted because they believed the Protestant Reformation (1517-1648) and Roman Catholic Counter Reformation (1545-1648) did not go far enough to establish a church based on a literal interpretation of the New Testament.
The Anabaptists created

a church with two distinctive departures from Protestants and Roman Catholics: first the insistence on adult baptism and second a commitment to nonviolence based on an interpretation of Jesus Christ as a pacifist. Thus the association Anabaptism Historic Peace with the Churches.

Historic Peace Churches a label referring collectto the Mennonites Quakers, and the Church of the Brethren. The term first appeared in 1935 at a meeting of the three denominations held at Newton, Kansas.

Though the churches were in contact over the centuries, modern joint endeavors were triggered by challenges growing from the First and Second World Wars regarding support for conscientious objectors and alternatives to military service.

In addition to pacifism nonresistance, Anaand baptism emphasized justice based on the influence of Pietsists The Pietism movement began in the late century. Pietism emphasized a personal emotioncharged conversion experience. The evidence of a personal religious conversion was demonstrated through engaging in social justice. Pietism required nonconformity to the world by rejecting secular literature, abstaining from consuming tobacco and alcohol, forbidding gambling, dancing, and attending the theater or secular ivals/amusements.

This Pietist emphasis on servant leadership and social justice within the context of nonconformity extended to personal appearance regard ing "plain dress." Plain clothis a strong political statement as it has historic roots in rejecting military uniforms reflecting rank and

accomplishment. Plain dress is an ideological statement symbolizing a belief in pacifism and nonresistance. Dressing plain means you are a member of a church which emphasizes humility, egalitarianism, and conformity to community.

Typically plain clothes for men means a dark suit with the lapels removed and this is called a standing collar 'plain coat" sometimes ac companied by broad fall pants. Men wear a felt or straw hat, the size of the brim can indicate their leadership role in the church. Plain dressed men do not wear neckties.

A plain dressed woman's wardrobe is defined by what is called a "cape dress" often accompanied with an apron, worn even when not in the kitchen, and can symbolize her husband or father's leadership role in the church. Their hair is grown long, worn pinned up, and finished with what is called a "coverwhich is a prayer veil and can be topped with a bonnet. Plain people do not wear cosmetics or jewelry.

A religious sect among

the Anabaptists, Pietists, and Historic Peace Churches is The Church of the Brethren. This denomination originated at Schwarzenau, county of Wittgenstein, Germany. In 1708 a group of Pietists, led by Alexander Mack (1679-1735). heavily influenced by Mennonites and Amish, distinguished themselves by insisting adult baptism be done triple immersion. through They also accompanied the observance of communion with a fellowship meal called the love feast.

Their leading teaching concerning baptism by immersion gave them the name 'Tunkers"or "Dunkers." Since this would be a German equivalent of "baptist," the name German Baptist was often used for them when they settled in Pennsylvania in 1719. Originally they adopted no name and did not think of themselves as a denomination. They referred to one ansimply as brethren.

The denomination spread through Pennsylvania, the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and westward to the Pacific lished six colleges and one theological seminary. The denomination's headquarters are in Elgin, Illinois.

In 1874 the Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren was established as a mission directed by the Chiques Church of the Brethren (1856) in Manheim. The congregation met in the Mechanic Street School east of the Square parallel to East High Street. In 1888 they built a church on Washington Street east of South Market Street. In 1902 the congregation was established as a church and no longer sponsored as a mission. In 1954 they built a new church on the corner of South Mount Joy and Cedar streets near their campus of Elizabethtown College.

The denomination held its first Annual Conference in 1778. Plain dress was universally adopted by the Church of the Brethren at their Annual Conference in 1804. It became a requirement for all baptized members of the church.

In 1885 Elizabeth Myer (1863-1924), a member of the Conestoga Church of the Brethren (1724) in Bareville

enrolled as a student at the School (1855). Elizabeth Myer was the only student at Millersville dressed in plain clothes. She was discerning leaving the school until Principal Benjamin Franklin Shaub (1841-1913) promised she would be respected for her convictions.

Dr. Shaub was a Mennonite and therefore symplain dress. pathetic to Student and faculty opposition to Shaub's support of Elizabeth Myer forced him to resign as principal in 1887. In the same year, Elizabeth Myer graduated and delivered the salutatorian address for the class of 1877. She taught in the Lancaster County public schools for 14 years. Elizabeth Myer's success inspired other Anabaptists of the plain sects to attend state normal schools and teach in public schools.

In the same year Elizabeth Myer entered Millers ville State Normal School (so named because it established a norm for the education of teachers) as a student wearing plain garb, the right of

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WORSHIP WITH US



BAINBRIDGE

Bainbridge **Church of God** 7 N. Front St.

Bainbridge **United Methodist Church** 149 Race St.

Falmouth United Methodist Church

180 Falmouth Road 717-344-9867 Sunday 8:45 Church Tuesday 6:30 Bible Study

Goods Mennonite Church

4374 Bossler Road 717-367-8040 Sept.-May: Sunday School 9:30am, Worship 10:30am June - Aug.: Worship 10:00am, No Sunday School www.goodsmennonite.org

St. Luke's Lutheran Church

106 N. Second St.

Word of Life Chapel 139 Wickersham Road

St. Paul's **Dove Christian Fellowship** 5 E. Park St.

Elizabethtown **Brethren in Christ Church**

996 E. High St. 717-367-2651 Worship Services 8:30 & 11am Sunday School (Adult, Youth and Children) 10:10am etownbic.org

Elizabethtown **Church of the Brethren** 777 S. Mount Joy St. Suite 1

E-Town Grace

305 Anchor Road 717-367-1281 9am Sunday School 10:15 Morning Worship Wed. Night Family Night 6:15pm Free Awana Program etowngrace.org

Elizabethtown **Mennonite Church**

300 S. Spruce St. 717-367-7089 anday vehaus mennin **Mount Calvary Church** 15 Evergreen Drive

New Wayv Ministries 105 S. Market St.

Rissers Mennonite Church 8360 Elizabethtown Road

Shenks Brethren in Christ Church

5842 Schoolhouse Road **South Central**

Baptist Association 751 E. High St.

St. Paul's United **Methodist Church** 398 N. Locust St.

717-367-1889 8:30am Worship 9:45am Sunday School 11:00am Worship www.spumcetown.com

St. Peters Catholic Church

904 Braeburn Road

Stevens Hill Community Church of the Brethren

Faith Outreach Center 475 Anderson Ferry Road

717-492-8167 Sunday 10am Worship Service Wednesday 7pm Family Night www.faithoutreachpa.com

> **Fellowship Baptist Church** 151 Orange St.

First Presbyterian Church 7 Marietta Ave

Florin Church of the **Brethren**

815 Bruce Ave.

Glossbrenner **United Methodist Church** 713 Church St.

Hope Community Church 1806 Harrisburg Ave.

Jehovah's Witnesses 861 Milton Grove Road

Lord's House of Prayer 22 W. Main St.

Mary Mother of the

College

Continued from page 7

achers to wear reasoness in public schools was nallenged, for the first time,

destination in the state of the parents wanted the nuns re-moved from the public school. The Supreme Court of Pennsylvania rejected the contention of wearing reli-gious garb amounted to sec-

contention of wearing religious garb amounted to sectarian teaching. The following year, the Pennsylvania Legislature effectively annulled the decision by pro-hibiting the wearing of religious proposed and the state by reme Court upheld the legislation.

In 1895 the state Legislature passed the Pennsylvania Garb Law. PL. 898-LI. Sec. 4801: "No teacher in any public school shall wear in said school or while engaged in the performance of his duty as such teacher any public school shall wear in said school or while engaged in the performance of his duty as such teacher any signia indicating the fact that such a teacher is a member or atherent of any religious order, sect, or denomination."

This legislation prompted discussions among Anabapitist groups in about establishing a private institution of higher education for students from plain sects in

tution of higher education for students from plain sects in Lancaster County. There was little support for establishing a college among the Mennon-ites. The Church of the Brethren, on the other hand, had established five colleges (actually myighte normal

had established five colleges (actually private normal schools) across the nation. In 1899 Elizabethtown College was established by members of the Church of the Brethren. The first fac-ulty member the College hired was Elizabeth Myer. This was a clear statement of

how the college was formed in response to the Garb Law by hiring the champion of de-fending plain dress in state normal schools and public

normal schools and public schools.

In the first Elizabeth-town College catalog, for the 1900-1901 academic year, it states "All those who are members of the Brethner cates of membership and it is expected that all such conform to the order of the church in all her doctrines, plainness of dress, and daily Christian deportment." In 1908 Lillian Herr Risser (1887-1988) graduated from Elizabethrown College. The Board of School Directors for Mount Joy Township hired

Elizabethtown College. The Board of School Directors for Mount Joy Township hired Risser, a plain dressed Mennonite from Lebanon County, to teach in the public schools. In 1909 the Board of School Directors of Mount Joy Township was brought under investigation for violating the 1885 Plain Garb Law. Certain non-Anabaptist members of the local community demanded the directors of the school, in compliance with the law, remove Lillian Risser from the classroom and the school directors subject to pay a fine.

The case was heard by Charles Israel Landis (1856–1802), president judge of the Courts of Lancaster County, Judge Landis was an Episcos Memonites Israel Landis (1856–1802), president judge of the Courts of Lancaster County, Judge Landis was an Episcos Memonites from Paradise who was sympathetic to plain garb Judge Landis ruled the Act of 1895 was contrary to Sections 3 and 4 of Article I of the Bill of Rights.

The Junior Order of Cnited American Mechanics (1844) held their annual convention in Lancaster. This group was anti-Roman Catholic. They supported the 1895

group was anti-Roman Cath-olic. They supported the 1895 Garb Law as a way to pre-vent nuns from teaching in public schools. At their conpublic schools. At their convention they appropriated \$1,000 toward the expenses of testing the Lillian Risser case and appealing to the Su-preme Court of Pennsylva-

Elizabeth Myer, editor of



Alpha Hall, the oldest building on the Elizabethto

the Elizabethtown College's newspaper "Our College's newspaper "Our College are Times," feel and communication of the Stone of the Ston

ation of the law.

In 1949 the Garb Law of
1895 was absorbed into the
Public School Act Section
1112 "Religious Garb, Insignia, etc., Prohibited, Penalty.—(a) That no teacher in
any public school shall wear
in said school or while en-

the board sole power to elect its members.

All but the last three presidents of Elizabethtown College were ordained clergy in the Church of the Brethren and several were evangelists such as President Ralph W. Schlosser (1886-1978), class of 1907, who held 225 evangelied revival meet-225 evangelical revival meet-ings in the course of 55 years in over 10 states. Many of the gaged in the performance of his duty as such teacher any

of the Brethren became more consistently embraced when the denomination assumed ownership of Elizabethtown College during the First World War. While Elizabethtown College was established by members of the Church of the Brethren, it was not legally owned by the denomination for the first 18 years. With the First World War looming and concerns about conscientious objection and options for alternative military service for Elizabethtown College sustents, on April 25, 1917, ownership of the college was assumed by the Church of The Brethren's General Education Board. For 75 years the college was legally owned, governed, and funded by the Church of the Brethren.

by the Church of the Brethren.
On Dec. 3, 1982, a Mutual Expectations Committee produced a "Statement of Basic Understanding" establishing a covenant rather than legal relationship between the church and college. Accordingly the "church cannot and should not control the college, and the college cannot and should not expect the

presidents presidents, deans, and fac-ulty were alumni of the col-

his duty as such teacher any dress, mark, emblem or in-signia indicating the fact that such teacher is a member or adherent of any religious or-der, sect or denomination. The law still stands today in Pennsylvanias and other re-lated the stands of the Church of the Brethren became more consistently embraced when the denomination assumed lege.

Most of the students were right off the local farms in southeastern Pennsylvania, six of the past presidents could speak the Pennsylvania German dialect fluently. Although Elizabethtown College is rooted in Anabaptism and strongly influenced by the local Pennsylvania Dutch culture. the institution has

the local Pennsylvania Dutch culture. the institution has always been ecumenical.

In the original charter for the college it is clear the school was not established only for members of the Church of the Brethren but "shall be open to all such as desire to avail themselves of its privileges."

According to a statement

its privileges."
According to a statement crafted by faculty and students appearing in 1904 in the school newspaper "...the doors are open to everybody, regardless of creed, and they are not to be intimidated on account of their honest, relieful and the statement of their honest, relieful and the statement of their honest, relieful and the statement of their honest relieful and the statement of yet no one on account of his religious convictions, shall in any way be embarrassed while making his sojourn with us; but that he shall always feel at liberty to hold his honest religious convictions, even though they may in some degree be at variance with others."

One of the college's benefactors, Mennonite Elmer Esbenshade (1881-1967) wrote in yet no one on account of his

1967 how he believed "every youth, regardless of race, creed, or color, ought to pre-pare themselves for life by securing an education that will qualify them for some worthwhile vocation." Adding how the world needs into the color of the c church to totally finance its operations and assume all of the legal responsibilities of ownership." On Oct. 23, 1993, the Board of Trustees the Board of Trustees amended the College's Art-

and welfare of human kind.
In 1967 a committee w
appointed to review the pu
poses of the college. The conposes of the college. The committee issued the statement, "While the College does not expect that the total Faculty be Christian or reflect any one point of view, it does ex-pect that the goals and the purposes of the institution will be respected by all Fac. will be respected by all Fac-ulty." Consistent with this history, Elizabethtown Col-lege offers a bachelor's de-gree in interfaith leadership

gree in interfaith leadership studies. Elizabethtown College is still firmly rooted in the Ana-baptist and Pietist tradition within the context of the His-toric Peace Churches.

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The college's Center for Clobal Understanding and Peacemaking annually hosts the Ware Colloquium on Peach Making, underwritten by Charles and Colloquium on Peach Making, underwritten De Colloquium on Historic Charles and Colloquium Class of 1988. The college offers a minor in peace and conflict studies. The college cur-riculum features classes such as "Anabaptist and Pi-etist Movements," "Amish, Brethren, and Mennonites in the U. S. Since 1875," "Peace, War, and Nonviolence," "Peacemaking and Social Justice in the Elble."

The president of Eliza bethtown College, European historian Dr. Carl J. Strik-werda, a member of the Elizabethtown Church of the

Elizabethown Church of the Brethren. regularly teaches the course "Peace and War in a Global Word."

The college library is home to the Church of the Brethren Archives located in the Earl H and Anita F. Hess, Class of 1953, Archives and Special Collections.

The Office of Church Relation is part of the Institutional Advancement division and is a bridge between the

tional Advancement division and is a bridge between the College and the Church of the Brethere's Atlantic Northeast and Southern Pennsylvania Districts.

The college financial aid office features the Church of the Brethren Scholarship to students who are active members of the Church of the Brethren of the Brethren of the Brethren of the Brethren of the Church of the Brethren of the Brethren of the Church of the Brethren of the Stephen of the Church of the Brethren of the Brethren of the Church of the Brethren of the Brethren of the Brethren of the Church of the Brethren of

members of the Church of the Brethren members of the Church of the Brethren was the second of the Brethren and Valley Ministry Center which was established in 1983 in collaboration with the Church of the Brethren Berthany Theological Seminary (1905), and the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

The offices for a study abroad program called Brethren Colleges Abroad have been on campus since it was created in 1962.

In his inaugural address as the 11th president of the College, on Nov. 5, 1977, The Reverend Dr. Mark C. Ebersole (1921-2011), class of 1943, said, "Through philosophy, history, legend, poetry, religion, and all other liberastics of the College of the College Seminary of the College Seminary Legend, poetry, religion, and all other liberastics that the College Seminary Legend, poetry, religion, and all other liberastics that the College Seminary Legend, poetry, religion, and all other liberastics that the college and character."

President Ebersole's words are echoed in the purpose and character."

that will bring sublimity of purpose and character."

President Ebersole's words are echoed in the purpose of the college as described by the Board of Trustees in a statement issued in 1927, "...the ideals and purpose of the founders of the college...harmonious development of the intellectual, moral, physical, and spiritual life of the student."

On Sturday, May 20, 2017, the senior class of Elizabethoun College will commence on a journey of lifelong learning. They have been prepared for this quest through four years of an ecumenical liberal arts education steeped in a tradition of peace, nonviolence, and social justice established by the Anabaptists, and flistoric Peace Churches of Blizabethoun, Pennsylvania.

This monthly column about histor ic structures in the Elizabethtown area is written by Jean-Paul Benowitz, a historian who is also the director of student transition programs at Elizabethtown College. It is illustrated by Shanise Marshall, a 2015 graduate of Flizabethtown College.







